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ABSTRACT

A reverse causality model treating mass media use for public affairs information as a result rather than as a cause of political behavior was tested utilizing surveys of 190 Mexican-American, 176 black, and 225 white adults. The criterion variable used in each sample was frequency of television and newspaper use for public affairs information. The major predictor variables measured were diffuse support (general allegiance to the United States), political participation, and sense of political efficacy (the feeling that individuals can play a part in bringing about political and social change). Analysis of the findings revealed that political participation significantly predicted mass media use for public affairs information among all three groups. Respondents who were politically active were more likely to use newspapers and television for public affairs information than those who were not. The evidence for the other two political socialization variables was less conclusive. It was concluded that reverse causality models in political socialization and mass media research have some validity, especially for white populations. (FL)

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Political Socialization and Mass Media Use: A Reverse Causality Model

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Political Socialization and Mass Media Use: A Reverse Causality Model

Most models of political communication treat mass media use as an independent variable and political socialization of media audiences as the dependent variable. Early studies, for example, investigated the effects of mass media use on change in voter affect and behavior during political campaigns. A general finding was that there was little direct influence, primarily because most of the variance in voting preferences can be accounted for by predispositions such as social class, parental party affiliation, group memberships and religion. Also, most voters make up their minds early in the campaign, and the small percentage who do change are more likely to be affected by personal communication sources (i.e., "opinion leaders") than by the mass media (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, 1948; Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes, 1966). These early findings led to the formulation of a "limited effects" model (Klapper, 1960), which generally considers the mass media to be reinforcers of existing political attitudes and behavior, and to be relatively ineffective as agents of change.

More recently, political communication research has moved away from analysis of change in adult voting behavior and attitudes during political campaigns, and has focused instead on the influence of the mass media on the acquisition of political cognitions (knowledge of campaign issues, candidates and general public affairs), affect (political efficacy, trust and support),

and behavior (campaign participation, voting). These models, as represented by the work of Chaffee and McLeod and their colleagues (e.g., Chaffee, McLeod and Wackman, 1973; Chaffee, Ward and Tipton, 1970), typically predict that the mass media are significant agents in the political socialization process. Since the interest is in mapping out how political impressions are formed in the tabula rasa, many of these studies have used youth (i.e., teenage) samples; a few have investigated the process in children. The developing research literature in this area indicates that there is promising evidence regarding the causal relationship between media use and political knowledge; the evidence regarding media use and political affect and behaviors, however, is inconclusive (Chaffee, 1977; Kraus and Davis, 1976).

There seems to be little doubt that media use for public affairs information leads to greater knowledge of public affairs, candidates and issues. Chaffee, Ward and Tipton (1970) showed by cross-lagged correlations that media use led to political knowledge gain among Wisconsin junior and senior high school students during the 1968 presidential campaign. Atkin and Gantz (1975) also provide evidence of a causal relationship between attention to television news and gains in knowledge of public figures and current events. Correlational evidence can be found in Johnson (1973), Hollander (1971) and Conway et al. (1975). With the exception of Atkin and Gantz and Conway et al., who used children as their samples, these surveys sampled teenagers.

The evidence regarding mass media effects on the acquisition of political behaviors and affect is less supportive. Although a subsequent path analysis of portions of their data showed moderate though significant path coefficients

between media use and political activity (Jackson-Beeck and Chaffee, 1975), Chaffee, Ward and Tipton (1970) could show no causal connection after the original cross-lagged correlational analysis. Similarly, Chaffee (1977) concludes after analysis of media use and political activity of a national sample of 1348 young people interviewed over an eight-year period that the time-lagged correlations "do not lend support to an inference that there is a causal or predictive relationship over time: i.e., activity levels neither predict nor are predicted by media use levels (print or electronic) over either long or short periods of time" (page 238).

The evidence is no more conclusive when political affect is used as the dependent variable in mass media and political socialization research. McLeod, Brown and Becker (1975) report that young voters who were relatively frequent users of newspapers and television for public affairs information tended to increase their sense of political efficacy during the Watergate scandals, while sense of political efficacy in others decreased. Chaffee (1977), however, reports no significant correlations between media use and either party identification strength or trust in the political system, although perceived political efficacy was moderately associated with electronic media use, but only in the high school sample. Other writers have questioned the assumption that increased media public affairs use should lead to increased feelings of political trust, efficacy and support. Graber (1976) suggests that the mass media, and newspapers in particular, tend to depict presidential candidates as deficient in personal and professional qualities essential for the presidency, and that this stress on negative qualities of all candidates with "major headlines going to the most damaging accusations" may be partially

responsible for low voter turnouts in some presidential elections. Robinson (1975) similarly contends that television and newspapers are largely responsible for the public's disillusionment with government.

It seems then that mass media effects on affective and behavioral orientations of voters and potential voters are not clear. A review of relevant studies suggests that null findings and contradictory evidence can be attributed to at least three reasons:

1) The relationship between mass media use and acquisition of political affect and behaviors is not significant, for the same reasons that the mass media have little effect on change in voter attitudes and behaviors during political campaigns. The origins of most political attitudes and behaviors might be found in the family, school and peer associations, and the primary function of the media becomes one of reinforcement.

2) There is no consistent relationship between mass media use and the acquisition of political affect and behaviors. The relationship is interactive, rather than additive, and depends on a host of intervening variables, such as family communication patterns, individual personality differences (e.g., need for orientation), political events (e.g., Watergate, the Vietnam War), and family background (e.g., SES).

3) The direction of causality may be the reverse of what is commonly postulated by current communication models. Rather than mass media use determining political affect and behaviors, it may be that a person's political attitudes (such as sense of efficacy and diffuse support for the government) and behaviors (e.g., active campaign participation) determine his/her use of the mass media.

This paper explores the merit of the reverse causality hypothesis and reports data from an investigation of political socialization and mass media use of Black, Mexican-American and White adults.

Political Socialization To Mass Media Use

There is evidence that use of the mass media for public affairs information predicts future knowledge gain in public affairs. The time order of mass media use in relation to the development of political affect and behaviors, however, is not as clear. Which comes first - use of the mass media for public affairs information, or feelings of political efficacy, support and inclination to participate actively in politics? We shall argue here, on the basis of research in developmental political socialization, that regular and intentional use of the mass media for public affairs information follows the acquisition of political affect and behaviors, and should therefore be treated as the criterion variable in political communication models. The political socialization variables used in the present analysis are diffuse political support, sense of political efficacy and political participation. The mass media use variable analyzed is use of newspapers and television for public affairs information.

Political Support: Easton and Dennis (1969), in their analysis of the origins of political legitimacy in children, define political support as "feelings of trust, confidence or affection" that persons may direct at their political community, regime or authorities" (page 57). They suggest that there are basically two types of support for any given political system: specific support and diffuse support. Specific support depends on the person's perceptions

of whether he/she is getting what is "justly" theirs from the system (outputs). This type of support may fluctuate from time to time, depending on such perceptions. Diffused support, on the other hand, is more permanent. It is generalized support for the system, and does not depend upon delivery of specific outputs. Because citizens are bound to get disappointed from time to time with their political system, diffuse support is generally regarded as a necessary condition for the maintenance of any given political system.

Most studies of political socialization of children indicate that widespread and consensual approval of government can be observed as early as the third grade, and that this orientation is consensual and fairly stable through the eighth grade. Easton and Dennis (1969), for example, report that children at all grade levels (third to eighth) in their samples attributed benevolent, protective, helpful and otherwise positive qualities to government. Children from all age groups also saw the government as virtually infallible, with little variation between the youngest and oldest groups.

In general, it can be concluded that diffuse support for the political system develops at a relatively early age (Grade 3), is stable, and shows almost no change through elementary school years (Easton and Dennis, 1969; Hess and Torney, 1968). Also, the early formation of this affective bond with the political structure is relatively permanent, and may predispose adults to extend diffuse support for the political system even at times when specific support is not forthcoming (Easton and Dennis, 1969).

Political Efficacy: Conceptually, political efficacy can be divided into three components: as a norm, as a psychological feeling, and as a form of behavior (Easton and Dennis, 1967). As a norm, political efficacy is expressed

in the expectation that citizens should participate actively and effectively in politics. As a form of behavior, it is manifested in citizens' activities aimed at influencing the course of political events in their society. And, as a psychological disposition, political efficacy can be defined as:

> the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact on the political process, i.e., that it is worthwhile to perform one's civic duties. It is the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change (Easton and Dennis, 1967, page 26).

Most studies of political efficacy in children have focused on the third component, since it is not very likely that children will have had the opportunity to participate directly in the political system. Also, as Easton and Dennis (1967) suggest, children will very likely agree to the norm as a matter of rote. It is the psychological component, therefore, which is relevant to and variable in children.

The evidence indicates that political efficacy, as a psychological disposition, develops early in children, although a bit later than diffuse political support. Hess and Torney (1968) showed that the sharpest increase in political efficacy scores in their national samples occurred between grades four and five, and that by the time a child had reached the eighth grade, his/her political efficacy scores were similar to scores of their teachers. It can be concluded that expectations of governmental responsiveness become highly socialized during the elementary school period, beginning at about the fourth grade, and that by the time the child is in the eighth grade, his/her sense of political efficacy is similar to adults.

Political Participation: Adult political participation is often conceptualized as the behavioral component of political efficacy (Easton and Dennis, 1967; Hess and Torney, 1968). Operationally, it is manifested in voting, and active participation in the campaign such as wearing campaign buttons, signing petitions, attempting to influence others to a particular political viewpoint through interpersonal communication.

Political participation is obviously more relevant to adults than to children. But when does the predisposition to active adult political participation begin, and how permanent are these initial predispositions?

According to Hess and Torney (1968), there are at least three attitudes and behaviors in children which are relevant to political participation later in life. These are participation in political discussion, conception of the importance of voting to the political system, and actual participation in non-voting activities in political campaigns.

In their national studies of the development of political attitudes in children, Hess and Torney (1968) found that extensive political discussion begins as early as the third grade, when 57.1% of their sample said that they had talked with parents about the country's problems, 52.4% indicated that they had talked with parents about a candidate, and 49.0% said that they had talked with friends about a candidate. As can be expected, the percentages increase with age. At the eighth grade, the sample percentages, respectively, were 71.7%, 85.0% and 89%.

The evidence also indicates that perceptions of the importance of voting as a political activity increase with age during the elementary school years. In the Hess and Torney (1968) surveys, voting was seen as the

most influential political actvity by 48 percent of fourth-graders, 59 percent of sixth graders, and 65 percent of seventh and eighth graders. Campaign activity, as expected, increased with age, but started as early as the third grade when 43.5 percent reported wearing a campaign button and 21.6 percent said that they had handed out buttons and handbills. At the eighth grade, the percentages, respectively, were 63.4 and 26.9. Interestingly, more eighth graders wore campaign buttons (63.4%) than their teachers (49.3%). More teachers (34.7%) than eighth graders (26.9%) had handed out buttons and handbills.

Lending support to the assumption that the inclination to participate actively in politics is established early in life is what Sigel and Hoskin (1977) call the "persistence-beyond-childhood" model of adult political socialization. This model considers political preferences and attitudes learned early in childhood as enduring predictors of adult orientations. With regards to political participation, it has been found that the actions of "liberal" youths in movements for civil rights, ecology and world peace often are based on political values acquired during childhood. Flacks (1969) , for example, points out that active youth in his samples came from predominantly liberal homes, and thought that they were acting according to beliefs taught them by their parents.

In summary, it can be concluded that the inclination to participate actively in politics begins as early as the third grade, and progresses cumulatively until the eighth grade. Many of the political orientations in eighth graders are similar to those of their teachers. This suggests that adult levels may have been achieved at that age.

Mass Media Use for Public Affairs Information: Most studies of media use by children indicate that regular and heavy television viewing starts as early as age three, and that general use of newspapers and magazines increases from the middle school years onward (e.g., Maccoby, 1964). During early childhood, any exposure to the mass media results in incidental exposure to public affairs. Most of this information, however, is readily lost, and it is not until late adolescence that political information is meaningfully assimilated by the individual (Connell, 1971).

There is evidence that regular and purposive use of the mass media for public affairs information does not begin in early childhood. Hess and Torney (1968) found that television, newspapers, magazines and radio were not rated very highly by their elementary school samples (grades 4 to 8) as valued sources of voting information. When children were asked where they would search for advice about whom to vote for if they could vote, the alternative "make up my own mind" received an increasing number of choices with age - 31% at grade four and 53% at grade eight. The mass media (combined categories for radio, TV, magazines and newspapers) were mentioned by 4.9% of fourth graders and 16.1% of eighth graders. Parents were mentioned by 46.8% of third graders and 20.8% of eighth graders.

Most other studies of the origins of mass media use for public affairs information have focused on teenagers. Early teen years are often characterized by low levels of attention to news and public affairs contents of television and newspapers (McLeod, Chaffee and Wackman, 1975). By the time they are juniors and seniors in high school, teenagers begin to rate the media as the most important sources of political information (Chaffee, Ward and Tipton, 1970).[1]

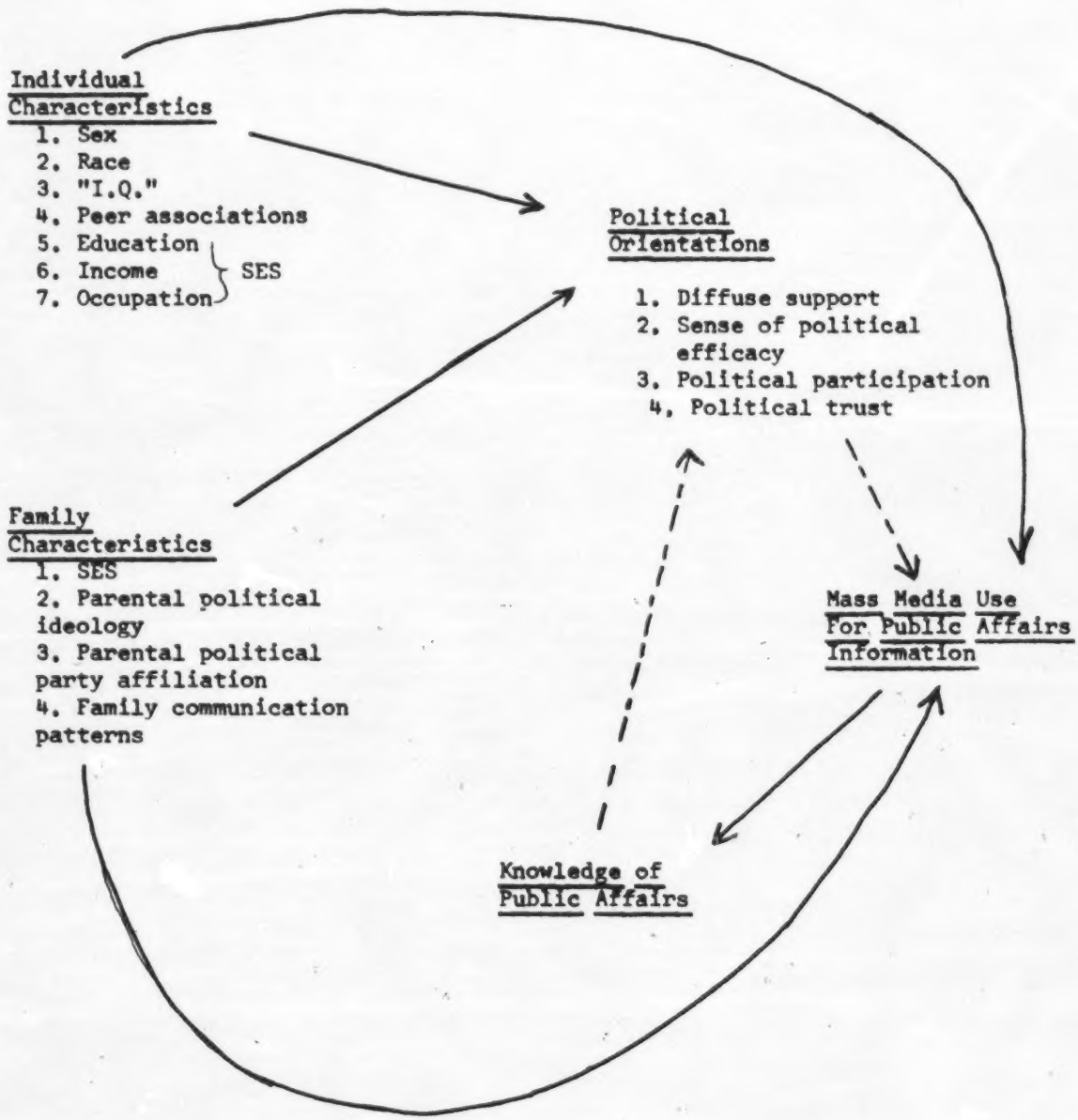
Most available evidence, then, indicates that regular, widespread and purposive use of the mass media for public affairs information begins no earlier than the junior and senior years in high school. Considering that parental influence on media use is limited (Chaffee, 1977; Jennings and Niemi, 1975), it can be concluded that by the time a person begins to use the media regularly for public affairs information, other political orientations (e.g., political affect and inclination to participate actively in politics), which develop earlier in childhood and which are significantly influenced by the family, are well established.

A Reverse Causality Model

The studies reviewed in the preceding section support a reverse causality model which would treat mass media use for public affairs information as a result, rather than as a cause of political affect and behaviors. Diffuse political support, sense of political efficacy and inclinations towards political participation seem to develop early in childhood, beginning in the early elementary school years. Many of these orientations, as found in eighth graders, are very similar to orientations found in adults. Mass media use for public affairs information, on the other hand, does not begin until the late high school years.

A reverse causality model is presented in Figure 1. Solid lines depict paths of causality which have some empirical basis. Broken lines are paths that seem plausible, but which have not been subjected to extensive empirical testing. In this model, a person's use of the mass media for public affairs information is determined by his/her political orientations, which in turn are influenced by a host of predispositional variables. Knowledge of public affairs is the only political socialization variable hypothesized to be an effect of mass media use.

Figure 1
Political Socialization to Mass Media Use:
A Reverse Causality Model



The model presented in Figure 1 implies that political affect and behaviors may, at their early stages of development (and perhaps even later) have little or no basis in political knowledge. Although this assumption runs counter to traditional democratic theory and the image of the "omnicompetent citizen" (Hennessey, 1965), there is indirect support from some empirical studies. Research on the development of political attitudes in children, for example, indicate that these attitudes are generally "barren of real content and comprised mostly of affective evaluations" (Sigel and Hoskin, 1977, page 264). Sears (1969), in an extensive review of studies on the processing of political information, concludes that "the average citizen, not usually involved in politics, attends to only the most salient headlines of the day" (page 326), and that many people simply are not familiar with the main political issues or events of the day. This conclusion is supported by current public opinion polls which indicate that knowledge levels of the American public about a variety of public issues (e.g., the energy problem) run from moderate to low.

Our model does not imply that citizens will forever be operating from within a vacuum of political knowledge. At some point, after extensive use of the mass media for public affairs information, some knowledge gain may result, perhaps incidentally. However, political attitudes and participation are not necessarily based on knowledge of the political system and issues, but are here hypothesized to be a result of family, individual and structural predispositions. These political orientations are in turn considered to be causes of extended use of the media for public affairs information.

This model would lead researchers to ask different questions about political communications. Rather than looking for mass media effects on the acquisition of political feelings and behaviors, we would be trying to explain a person's use of the mass media in terms of his/her political orientations In addition to the direct paths from political feelings and behaviors to mass media use, one would also be looking at the indirect influence of predispositional variables on media use.

The Diffusion of Political Information

Chaffee (1975) presents a model of political information diffusion which suggests that a person's acquisition of political information may depend on his/her political orientations. In his model, the emphasis is on system (political and communication) constraints on the diffusion of political information within a given polity. The emphasis on constraints, according to this analysis, will yield more theoretically promising research questions about how and why different political information contents diffuse at different rates within various segments of the polity. The more common S curve used to describe diffusion rates, according to Chaffee, is simply the manifestation of the absence of constraints, and can therefore be thought of as "null" or random models. Constraints on the diffusion of political information, Chaffee suggests, can be found in information sources, communication media, political authorities, or in the receivers themselves. It is his analysis of receiver constraints that is directly relevant to the model proposed in this paper.

According to Chaffee (1975), there are at least four types of general political orientations in members of the U.S. political system (see Figure 2) .

Figure 2
Levels of Orientation to a Political System*

Level	General Orientation	Relevant Parameters of System	Relevant Political Information	Popular Label
I	passive	diffuse support	identification of authorities	"apathetic"
II	active	support input	constraints on demands	"conservative"
III	active	system output	policy decisions	"establishment" "inside-dopester"
IV	active	demand input	all types	"liberal" "radical"

* This figure is reproduced from Chaffee (1975).

The important distinctions between these types can be found in the parameters of the system relevant to each type. These political orientations determine what political information will be relevant, and can explain why political information does not diffuse at a uniform rate among various segments of the polity.

If we are willing to assume that the mass media are the primary sources of political information for adults in the system, then we can infer, from Chaffee's model, that political orientation will be a determining factor in how the individual uses the media for public affairs information. Passive members will be interested in authorities and political personalities while actives will be be receptive to system input/output related information (see Figure 2). Thus, these predictions pertain to the contents of political information that will be sought by different political orientation types. A further inference, one that is made by our reverse causality model, is that a person's political orientations will determine the degree to which the media are used for public affairs information. The two models are therefore similar in that both consider political orientations as the independent variable, and mass media use as the criterion variable. There are, however, two differences.

First, Chaffee's model assumes a homogeneous, consensual (i.e., high) level of diffuse support for the political structure and authorities across the general orientation types, except for "radicals". Apathetics, conservatives, establishment types and liberals vary in their perceptions of what system parameters are relevant. However, level of diffuse support is taken to be a

constant within and between groups. The model presented in this paper takes a different approach to the diffuse support variable. We are postulating that diffuse support can vary across individuals, and that this variation will have important consequences on how much and how often the mass media are used for public affairs information. This assumption is not unreasonable considering recent political socialization research. While traditional models stress the consensual, homogeneous and supportive nature of political socialization in this country, recent studies have focused on variables which may account for deviations from the consensual model, variables such as ethnic background (Greenberg, 1970; Tan and Vaughn, 1976), age (Jennings and Niemi, 1968; Easton and Dennis, 1969), and socio-economic status (Easton and Dennis, 1969; Greenberg, 1970). These deviations are small, and are not strong enough to alter the conclusion that the process is basically consensual. However, the focus in the model presented here is on whether these deviations, no matter how small, can affect mass media use.

The second difference is that we are assuming variations occur not only in levels of political support, trust and efficacy, but also in political participation. Not all conservatives and liberals, according to our model, are necessarily actively involved in the political system. It is variance in political participation that we are interested in, as a predictor of mass media use.

These differences do not make the two models incompatible. A combination of the two approaches is presented in Figure 3.As can be seen, the revised

Figure 3
Political Orientation and Mass Media Use (revised Chaffee model)

General Orientation	Relevant System Parameters	Level of Political Affect	Level of Political Participation	Relevant Political Information	Degree of Political Information Seeking
Passive	Diffuse Support	Low to High	Low	Identification of authorities	Low to High (probably low)
Active	Support Input	Low to High	Low to High	Constraints on demands	Low to high
Active	System Output	Low to High (probably high)	Low to High	Policy decisions	Low to high
Active	Demand Input	Low to High	Low to High (probably high)	All types	Low to high (probably high)

model adds levels of diffuse support, political trust, efficacy and political participation as variables in the analysis. The original Chaffee model leads to predictions regarding the relationship of political orientation type to content preferences in public affairs information. The revised model leads to these same predictions, but can also account for differences in degree of information seeking for these content types.

A Test of Causal Relationships Between Political Orientations And Mass Media Public Affairs Use

The study reported here tests a path analysis model (Figures 4,5 and 6) in which education is the exogeneous variable and media use for public affairs information is the second stage endogeneous variable. The political socialization variables (political efficacy, diffuse support and political participation) are effects of education, and causes of media use. In addition, direct paths are hypothesized between education and media use, political efficacy and political participation, and between diffuse support and political participation. The model is tested for Black, White and Mexican-American adults.

Assumptions: The basic assumption of the path model is that there is causal ordering between the variables as indicated by directional paths. The assumption of causal ordering, ordinarily made in path analysis (Wright, 1960; Land, 1969) is justified by the time-order in which political socialization and mass media use for public affairs information develop. There is evidence that political orientations develop early in life, preceding regular and extensive use of the mass media for public affairs information,

and should therefore be treated as independent rather than criterion variables in the model. The time-order source of causal inference is generally considered to be "one of the most indisputable sources of causal assumptions" (Land, 1969, page 34).

A second assumption in the present analysis is that the system identified is causally closed to outside influence with respect to covariation between exogeneous and endogeneous variables. Again, this assumption of "causal closure" is ordinarily made in path analysis (Land, 1969). Its validity for any given model is tested by an examination of residuals and covariance between variables.

Education is included in the analysis as the source or ultimate variable because previous studies have demonstrated that it is a significant predictor of both media use (e.g., Chaffee, 1977) and political orientation (Easton and Dennis, 1969; Dawson and Prewitt, 1969; Hess and Torney, 1968).

The hypothesized paths from diffuse support and political efficacy to political participation are suggested by previous correlational evidence, and by data indicating that political affect develops a little earlier in children than political participation (Easton and Dennis, 1969; Hess and Torney, 1968). A non-causal relationship is assumed between political support and efficacy (as indicated by the non-directional curves joining the two variables in the Black and Mexican-American samples), since these variables seem to develop at about the same time, and are similar in structure and contents (Easton and Dennis, 1969).

In addition to testing the validity of the path model, several specific predictions about the valence of the relationships between political socialization and media use can be made:

H-1: Respondents with higher levels of diffuse support for the political structure will use the mass media more for public affairs information than will respondents with less diffuse support.

H-2: Respondents with a greater sense of political efficacy will use the media more for public affairs than those with a lesser sense of political efficacy.

H-3: Respondents who are active politically will use the mass media more for public affairs than those who are less active.

In regression terms, these three hypothesis can be restated as: Increases in diffuse support, political efficacy and political participation will significantly predict increased use of television and newspapers for public affairs information.

H-1 and H-2 are suggested by previous studies indicating that disatisfaction with the political system may be accompanied by a rejection of many of the system's components and values, including the mass media which are generally regarded by dissenters as pro status quo (Marx, 1967; Tan and Vaughn, 1976). To a person with little diffuse support for the political structure and authorities, public affairs information may not be relevant at all. (One possible exception here is the activist "radical", on the left or right, for whom information about political authorities, decisions and processes may be instrumental in promoting anti-establishment activities. We are, however, assuming that radicals form an insignificant proportion of

our samples.) On the other hand, persons with high levels of political efficacy and diffuse support would be interested in the political system and authorities because they feel part of the system and assume that they can play a significant role in it.

The third hypothesis is based on the expectation that public affairs information will be more useful to a person actively involved in politics than to one who is not. This utility could be social (e.g., Atkin, 1972), in that new information would be useful in interpersonal communication. Or, it could be politically pragmatic, in that the information could be useful in attempts at converting others to a point of view. Public affairs information could also have self-expressive and reinforcement functions for the politically active individual. If a person has an image of himself as political activist, then he may think that others expect him to be well informed about the objects of his activity. Or, he may seek reinforcement for his behaviors and attitudes (e.g., evidence that the candidate he is actively supporting deserves that support). And finally, he may be interested in knowing the consequences of his political activity and will therefore seek out all relevant information.

Respondent race was built into the design to determine whether the same relationships between political orientations and mass media use hold across ethnic groups. There is evidence, both empirical and speculative, that ethnic minorities are either ignored or presented negatively in media news reports. The Kerner Commission , for example, in its report on the causes of civil disorders, concluded that Blacks were not presented in the news as "a matter of routine in the context of the total society", but instead appeared primarily in the context of disorder (Kerner, 1968, page 383). Similar conclusions

for Blacks and other ethnic minorities were reached by the U.S. Commission On Civil Rights (1977). A content analysis of network evening news prepared for the Commission showed that Black newsmakers, both male and female, were portrayed primarily in association with stories about their economic victimization. Men of Spanish origin appeared in the sample news programs only as criminals. The two stories about Native Americans dealt with the denial of their voting rights and the evacuation of Indians from a Wisconsin monastery, but did not feature any Indians (instead, Father James Groppi and Marlon Brando appeared as major newsmakers in the stories). Asian Americans and minority women other than Blacks did not appear in any of the network stories at all.

The Commission concludes that network television news during the sample periods did not consider minorities to be either significant nor important. They were almost totally absent from the reports; there were no stories that related directly to their activities and achievements, and when they did appear, they were usually presented in the context of disorder.

The nature of portrayals of ethnic minorities in mass media news leads us to expect that the hypothesized relationships between political orientations and mass media public affairs use will not be as evident in our Black and Mexican-American samples as in the White sample. Since there is little information that is directly relevant to Mexican-Americans and Blacks as ethnic sub-populations of the larger polity, even members of these groups who are highly politicized should find general public affairs news less interesting or useful than comparable white samples.

Methodology

Data for Blacks and Mexican-Americans were collected in personal interviews in Lubbock, Texas.[2] Respondents were selected using a random block sample design. Sections of the city which were 90 percent or more Black (or Mexican-American) were identified. Blocks were then assigned randomly to interviewers who were instructed to interview, alternately, male and female adults (persons 18 years or older) in housing units chosen randomly from assigned blocks. A random starting point in the block was designated, and every nth dwelling unit after that was included in the sample. Respondents were interviewed by mass communications graduate students trained in interviewing techniques. Interviews were completed within a one-week period in March, 1976. Total sample sizes were 190 for Mexican-Americans and 176 for Blacks.

Data for the white sample were collected in telephone interviews with 225 adults in Lubbock. Respondents were selected randomly from the city phone directory (using a random starting point within the first interval and taking every nth name after that). Interviews were done by graduate students in a mass communications theory seminar, and were completed in April, 1976.[3]

Measures

Mass Media Use: The criterion variable in all three samples was frequency of use of television and newspapers for public affairs information. Newspaper public affairs reading was measured by the following items:

> "When you read your newspaper and come across the following kinds of stories (local and state government and politics, national government and politics, international affairs), how often do you read them? Would you say you frequently, sometimes, rarely, or never read them?"

Responses to each newspaper content type were scored on a four-point scale, with "frequently" being assigned a score of 4. A total score for newspaper public affairs reading was computed by adding scores for the three content types.